



Grand Rapids Area
Chamber of Commerce

To: Members of the Senate Reforms, Restructuring and Reinventing Committee

From: Andy Johnston
Vice President, Government Affairs

Subject: Support for the Municipal Partnership Act

Date: May 4, 2011

On behalf of the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and our 2,700 members, I offer our support for the Municipal Partnership Act.

Removing barriers to the sharing of local government services is a long standing Chamber priority. Like a pilot project, this Act would support collaborative municipal service sharing partnerships in Kent County by setting aside binding arbitration for public safety employees for up to four years and allowing two or more local units of government to enter into a contract to provide services.

In West Michigan, local governments have found hundreds of money-saving ways to work together, but given the significant financial strain our municipalities are under to provide core services and the economic problems facing the state, removing barriers to increased cooperation and sharing of services is critical. The Legislature needs to enact this pilot legislation to demonstrate that a greater sharing of services and skills helps governments achieve economies of scale and take advantage of lower costs by providing services on a larger scale.

One concern with the proposed Act for the Chamber is that it would allow each local unit that enters into a contract to provide joint services the authority to ask local voters for up to five mills to pay for the service. We would ask that an amendment be considered to prohibit a local unit from levying a millage for a service if one is already in place for that service.

Many of our municipalities are under severe financial duress and the Municipal Partnership Act is an important step toward easing this burden.

Thank you for your consideration of our position and please and do not hesitate to contact me at (616) 771-0335 if we can be of assistance.

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Succeed!

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